Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park
and the
Gold Discovery Park Association

Oral History Project
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Lillian Carman
January 17
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MM: I'm Melody Moore and we'll be speaking here for the next while with Lillian Carman. Lillian, can you tell us a little bit about yourself, just your full name, when you were born, where you were born and how you came to be here.

LC: I was born in Napa County [January 12, 1915] and I came to Lotus in 1919, and I came to Coloma in 1920 when I was five years old, and started to school that year

MM: What school did you go to?

LC: In Coloma, the little Coloma School, all eight grades in one room.

MM: What property did you live on when you came to Coloma?

LC: Here where I'm living now. It has a long history, this piece of property. We bought it from Al Norris and we lived in the old, old house that originally was a Wimmer house, belonged to the Wimmers...two rooms, with a fireplace in between. And that house had been added on to I forget how many rooms, every room had an outside door and every door had a gun behind it. (laughing) I was thinking today how cold it was then because the house had no insulation.

MM: Did that house stand right here?

LC: It was right over here where the hole is.

MM: Just south of here.

LC: Right there, just a few feet, just across the driveway. And it burned down in 1947, the year before the centennial. My folks had moved out of it, over on to

Church Street on the other end of the property, I'd say in about 1934 or 5 and we had this rented. And we had this rented and it burned down. My memory of this house was the big Wimmer Oak which is right over it and when the wind blew at night in the wintertime, I'd lay there and wait for the tree to fall on me. I remember so many things. The attic was full of mice and rats that played all night, running around with acorns. I remember one time, the house, while we were living in it, caught on fire. My father got up on the roof and sent me out to the shed to bring a rope and I went out in my pajamas and got the rope and threw it and threw it clear over the house. Anyway...

MM: You threw the rope over the house to do....

LC: Well, I ran out to the shed and got the rope and I thought oh, I can't get it up on the roof, how am I throw it that far and I threw it so hard it went clear over the roof.

MM: Oh, it cleared the roof, wow!

LC: There are so many things to remember, we had chickens.

MM: How did your parents make a living?

LC: Oh, this was all orchards, the whole valley was orchards, I've given you that list [see appendix A] of all the people, how many acres they had, their names and what kind of fruit they had and the whole thing.

MM: That's in the papers that your brother [George Homer Metcalfe, born May 16, 1916, died January 1, 2001] prepared?

LC: Yes, in that little paper there. I wouldn't have remembered all...I remember some of the names, but not how many acres and what kind of fruit and all of that.

We had peaches, plums, apples, persimmons, quince, a few cherry trees and it was a lot of work. The fruit had to be pruned and irrigated and thinned, if there was too much fruit on the tree it had to be thinned. I used to help with the irrigation. We had ditches all over the place. This is one of my pet things, is the ditch, the farmer's ditch here. I think it's very, very important and there's a lot of people here in town who don't even know the ditch is there, or what it's for, or who is on it. I think at the present time we have about thirty ditch people, on the ditch, using the water.

MM: Does it still carry water?

LC: Oh, yes! And we have to keep it running. If we leave it for three years, we lose it, we lose the water rights. And they are very, very important. And water is getting more important every year. I remember the first ditch man, Frank Armstalden, used to live down here at the corner by the schoolhouse. When I came back up here in 1975, EID was running the ditch and they finally gave it up and a group of us, we run the ditch board. It's been a hassle to keep it going.

MM: Who runs the ditch now?

LC: We have a... we call it the Coloma-Lotus Ditch Users Association, or something like that and I'm on the board. We meet... we're having a meeting, I think, this next Sunday and we're having a problem because of the utilities. See, the other part of the ditch was completely wiped out when they had the flood a few years ago. Just completely devastated. There was no way we could get the water back in that ditch. So we came down and got permission from the camp down here, and so now we have a pump, a big pump, and we pump the water

up, up, up to the ditch. And it costs a lot of money, electricity; it's an electric pump. We can't have diesel because that would be noisy for the people in the valley. We've had a struggle to keep it going.

MM: How many people are on the ditch now?

LC: I think... I'd have to look in the file; I think there is maybe 30.

MM: Is there a map of it somewhere?

LC: Yes, I believe we have a map, I don't think I have one in my file, but our secretary probably has.

MM: I'm just asking that because I have heard other people mention an interest in the ditch, and the history of it.

LC: Oh yes, it's very important. We've had quite a struggle because of having to bring it down and pump it up with electricity and all of that.

MM: Other orchardists in the valley, are those mentioned in your brother's work here? The names?

LC: The names, acres and the kinds of fruit.

MM: OK, so we won't bother going through that then.

LC: Fruit trees grow old and lose their usefulness, so then, just about everybody took out their peaches and apples and all that stuff, and put in pears. Then later on as the years by, there was a big pear blight and wiped out a lot of the pear orchards. My father finally gave up on the pears and took all of the trees out and got sheep and irrigated the field with ditch water.

MM: So in what direction does your property run? Do you still have the whole piece of property?

LC: My father had eleven acres and when he died, before he died, my brother and I each bought five acres. I've got, I had, five acres here and my brother had five acres where Alan Ehrgart bought it from him and has a house over there. Howard Most who was our postmaster at one time bought an acre and the old house that my grandmother [Metcalfe] built in the '20s. I parceled off two one-acre lots down here.

MM: Your grandparents lived on this property, too?

LC: My grandparents came here in, I think I was about 12 years old, and built a house over on the corner there. The corner of Church where Highland comes up and hits Church.

MM: So your parents were here before your grandparents? And your parents came here from Napa? I'm trying to get the migration pattern straight.

LC: Yes, my father during World War I worked at the Vallejo shipyard. And then the war was over and he didn't have a job any longer and he'd saved up a little money and his father had a ranch in Lotus. His father was a mover, and he lived in every Northern County in California. He just went from one place to another.

MM: He was a mover by nature.

LC: I think he was kind of a horse trader and he'd trade, I think. And so he wanted my father to run the ranch and so we came up and my father put his savings into new orchard over there. This was on Mountain View, Mountain View Drive. I don't remember how many acres, but I was four years old at the time.

MM: So they were Metcalfes, your father's people.

LC: Metcalfe, yes and also had two uncles, the Johnson brothers who had sheep and they had Long Garden, if you know where Long Garden is. It's part of the Bacci property now. I still have a cousin who lives in Lotus.

MM: Can you describe a little about the way Coloma looked in your earliest memories, you know, what businesses were there and things like that.

LC: Well, when I came, the Sierra Nevada House was there where the hole is now, where the park has a maintenance shed down there. It was, I have pictures, not complete pictures, but I have pictures of the stairs going up to the bar and a kitchen and a dining room behind that and then there were rooms. And then down on the lower level, there was a big dance hall with a stage, the whole bit. And the steps went down there. We used to have dances there. I started dancing when I was six years old. The kids all learned to dance and they were going to the dances and they'd take their kids. The one who couldn't stay awake they'd slept on the benches around. There was a regular stage, curtains and everything and then above that was hotel rooms. I don't know how many rooms there were in that hotel. But that was the original Sierra Nevada House.

MM: And how often were there dances?

LC: Well, I can't remember, when I was that young. But later on, we had a dance someplace in the area Cool or Pilot Hill or Garden Valley or someplace, every Saturday night there was a dance someplace.

MM: Do you remember being one of the children sleeping on the chairs at Sierra Nevada House?

LC: No, I was probably dancing! I learned to dance pretty young. Then of course when I got into high school, my area was enlarged and I'd go to Garden Valley and other places and there was always, always a dance some place Saturday night.

MM: Let's see, you came in 1919?

LC: To Lotus in 19 and to Coloma in 20.

MM: So the vehicles that people were using, to drive around in at that time, were like Model T Ford kind of cars...

LC: My father had the first car here in Coloma. It was a Model T.

MM: Did you have horses for transportation too?

LC: But most everybody did. The Lotus Store as it is now, where it was, old Mrs. Eullenkamp

MM: Eullenkamp? What letter does that start with? E?

LC: E-U I think, Eullenkamp. I'm not sure how you spell Eullenkamp. But we called her old lady Eullenkamp and she had a store where the brick building is a little further down on Lotus Road, the old brick house, there. And then she built the Lotus Store. Then her daughter Lottie Gallaher, she married a Gallaher, not Gallagher, but Gallaher. He had a horse and buggy. When they first came here there was a telephone, but it was a private party telephone, my mother was the secretary and everybody had a certain number, like one long and two shorts, or whatever.

MM: Oh, a party line.

LC: Yeah, I forget how many people on one line, but anyway. Then we'd call the store and order what we needed and Dick Gallaher would bring it in his horse and wagon. Most of the men had horses. I knew an old Chilean Cowboy, that's all he had was a horse, he was one of my favorite he didn't have a car. He was one of my favorite men from the time I was four years old. He was a tough little guy.

MM: Do you know his name? Do you remember his name?

LC: His last name was Castilles. He was a Chilean. You know there was a group of Chileans who came for the Gold Rush.

MM: Yeah, Chili Bar...

LC: Yeah, Fred, Fred was his first name, Fred Castilles. And he had a brother Joe who lived up in Garden Valley on the street that goes over to 195 [193] Anyway Joe had a family, but Fred was a bachelor and he had a horse and he lived way out in the boondocks below Bacci's property.

MM: How'd he make a living?

LC: Cows, Bacci's had cows. Henry Bacci... By Gad Bacci we'd call him, and he was a Swiss-Italian and married Mary Costa, she was Portuguese, and they had three children. The youngest one, the girl was my age, the last, the boy just died recently, Francis Bacci, and Byron died a few years ago – Well he died when I first came up here, in 75 or 76.

MM: So at the time that you were a young woman, or a girl even, living here, and there were orchards was there any semblance of a park? Did the State own anything at that time?

LC: The monument, just the monument. They had property up there at the monument and the Native Sons had put that up there, that statue of James Marshall and that was it. And then after I left after I went away to school.

MM: Where did you go to school?

LC: I went to High School in Placerville and then I went to Berkeley to Armstrong's to Business College. I took a course in merchandising, which I never used. I was interested in becoming a display...the display department, defining displays.

MM: Oh, like windows and so forth.

LC: Yeah, I just never did anything with it. I lacked a little push and ambition. And I just drifted through life and things have come to me real easy and I eventually got married and my husband {Gordon Carman] is a dentist and he's just retiring at 89. He has an office down south in Joshua Tree. But, we came to Beaumont right after the war and built an office and I worked for 18 years in the office and then I had a serious operation and had to quit work. Doctors told me I'd be an invalid for the rest of my life, but I fooled them. And life...I just drifted through it.

MM: Do you have children?

LC: No, no children. Neither my husband nor I wanted children and we didn't have any.

Sometimes people ask me how I stay so young and I say, 'no kids!' It's not a very nice thing to say ...

MM: The fire's dying down a little bit, you're going to poke it up a bit.

LC: I love my fire, I've been in front of a fireplace all of my life. The fireplace that was in the original room, the Wimmer part of the house, I have a picture of that fireplace and then every place I've sit and every house I've built, I've had a fireplace.

MM: Let's talk about the history of the houses on this property again a little bit. You said that the original house that your parents bought burned down and that was like in '47 or something...

LC: It's in here, let's get it out and look...

MM: Oh, newspaper articles... So the house that burned down did that stand pretty much where we are here?

LC: It was right there (pointing out to the south). If you go outside you'll see the hole out there, that was the basement.

MM: So who built this house?

LC: Me.

MM: And when did you do that?

LC: In '75.

MM: So nothing was rebuilt, er, the old house was not rebuilt and this is as close as anything comes...

LC: (Looking through newspapers)

MM: This is the Thomas house, let's see...

LC: I was sure I had that in there. As I say it was pretty drafty, pretty cold house. I have old pictures of it (looking through newspapers).

LC: I was going to get these out before you came, but as I say, I just got back from town...

MM: What do you have here in the plastic bag?

LC: Oh, take it out and see. That's ...

MM: OK, I'm going to turn this off for a minute.

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MM: OK, you're telling about the dress that you found in the Clark House.

LC: It was given to me out of one of the trunks. The whole house was still furnished, I mean carpet on the floors and they tore the house down and there was a family, the owners, built a little cabin where the house is in the back there behind the Discovery House. Now Frank has that, it's an antique store. Right below that is another house where a Mr. Clark lived, I think his name was Frank. He worked as a custodian, he was an old man and he was the custodian at the schoolhouse, tidied up. What can I tell you about that.

MM: The Clark house stood where?

LC: Right where ...right across from the Sutter Center. It was a very big two-story house and the dress that was given to me had been worn by a Senator's wife in Washington, D.C. I guess one of the family was in politics or something. And the dress fit me just like it was made for and I used to wear it occasionally when there was something going, a tea or something, when I lived down south. When I came back up here, I felt it belonged in Coloma, so I donated it to the park. That was when Gus Till was Superintendent. And it was sent to Sacramento, it's in the archives down there and I've tried to find out what they did with it because it

should down here in the museum. And I told them that if they could get the Growlersburg men to make a display, it should be in a glass case, that I would pay for the material, or whatever it cost to make the... but nothing's ever been done with it.

MM: Have you talked to Ken [Simmons] about it?

LC: I haven't yet. I don't think I did, no.

MM: You've been actively involved with the park [Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park] for a long time; you have a big sense of what belongs to the park, or to the history.

LC: In a way, it's kind of a two-sided thing. Some people here resent the fact that the park has taken over the town and bought up as much as they could. I'm kind of in the middle, I can see both sides.

MM: It's a tough issue, and I know a lot of toes have been stepped on in the process.

LC: Yeah, but people tend to be touchy about things like that and I try to look at both sides because there are two sides to everything. You think you know what's going on and then you find out the other side of it. But, I do kind of resent the fact that they didn't put that dress on display. It's definitely part of Coloma, and I took very good care of it all the time that I had it and I had for well, I got it when I was about 16 or 17 and I gave it to the park when I came up here in '75 which was, so I had it a good many years and I took care of it. And it should be in a glass case and it should be in the museum.

MM: Is it silk?

LC: It's taffeta – brown plaid taffeta. I have a pair of earrings that were in that trunk and also a little cameo. And if they ever got around to put the dress on display, I'd give them those things. It needs a little collar and I have a lace collar, an old, old lace collar that they could put on it.

MM: This would be a good time to get that set to rights because they are doing a lot of work in the museum right now. I'll put a bug in Ken's ear and see if

LC: I'd like to see something done with it, otherwise it's just going to fall apart.

MM: Right, and like you said, it belongs here, where it came from

LC: Yeah, and the Clark family were rather prominent members of the community. I don't know if you can see their house in that old

MM: In that old picture ...

LC: That's across from... what was his name... the poet's house...

MM: Markham?

LC: Yeah, right across from Edwin Markham's house.

MM: Speaking of poetry, this is off the wall, but I've been talking to Dan Silverburg, because we're hoping to do an oral history of Florence, oh, what's her last name?

LC: Fannan?

MM: Yeah, she's kind of resistant, isn't feeling up to it. But, so I've been talking to Dan Silverburg, and he said when I spoke to you, that I should ask you about Edna St. Vincent Millay.

LC: She's my favorite poet (laughing). Has always been. I've always been into poetry and she...

MM: Do you write poetry?

LC: No, I never have, oh, I've written a few things. But when I was in my 20's or so she was my idea of a real poet. In fact I think I have her book here, her poems. Poor Edna, she had a few problems.

MM: I don't know her, I'll have to...

LC: She drank and she built a fire that destroyed a lot of her work, I think.

MM: What got you interested in her?

LC: I don't know, I've always been interested in poetry and I got to reading her and I liked the way she wrote.

MM: Have you read Markham's poetry?

LC: Uh, no.

MM: I haven't either.

LC: I don't think I have any of it. I've got quite a few books of poetry, but I don't think I have any of his.

MM: One of the things that people always come around to when they are talking about fairly recent history of Coloma is the Monroe family.

LC: The what?

MM: The Monroe family, Perly and...

LC: Oh, Monroes, that has been distorted.

MM: What can you tell me?

LC: I don't know except that everybody that knows says that's not the Monroe House down there.

MM: Yeah, I've heard that too. But, did you know the Monroe men?

LC: I knew Perly. Not well, but I knew Perly. I knew what was his name?

MM: Jim?

LC: No, well Jim,

MM: Monroe is who I'm thinking of...

LC: Yeah, Oh what was his name, he was a crazy guy and he used stay up at the Vineyard House. I knew when we came here there was a Mrs. Hall had the Vineyard House and she had two daughters and a son. Nancy was the oldest. Nancy played the piano and we used to have silent movies and she played the piano for the silent movies.

MM: Where were the movies shown?

LC: Well at first they were shown down in the... it was Old Sierra Nevada House before it burned down, then they were shown in the Grange Hall. Like once a week or something like that. And I could hear her in the evening playing the piano up at the Vineyard House, because it's right up there. We used to be able to walk, there's a field was open from here up to the Vineyard House. I knew the younger daughter, was maybe a couple of years older than I, and she went to school in Sacramento, and when she'd come up, I'd go up and we'd play in the rooms, in the hotel rooms upstairs, and then there was a big dance hall in the back of the Vineyard House.

MM: That was there until fairly recently, wasn't it? Or is it still there?

LC: Uh, I think that when Paul Savage was in the Vineyard House, he made that into an apartment for his family. And I was there after the apartment had been made and I think that was the old ballroom.

MM: Speaking of piano players, you must have known the Thomas's, too, then, in the Thomas house.

LC: Yeah, I knew Fred Thomas and Mamie Thomas and I forget the other names, but I knew the ones that lived over there in the Thomas house and then there was another Thomas house up here, just below 49 and there was a Muller house, across the river across from Gallagher's property, and I think they were related to the Thomases or else there was a Thomas lived next door to them. You've seen the picture of all the women down on bridge... Mamie Thomas was in there and Mrs. DeLorey, oh, a lot of the women that I knew at that time.

MM: And you must have known some Papini's? You must have known Virginia...

LC: Virginia is about my age and I still see her.

MM: We're hoping to talk to her.

LC: She probably knows, because her family were here before mine...her sister Emma, was my first teacher down here.

MM: Oh, do you remember the names of any of the other teachers.

LC: There was a Miss Thompson. And there was a Portuguese girl and I can't remember her name. There was a man teacher, and he spanked me. (laughing) He'd be in trouble now, but I guess I laughed out of turn or something and he took me in the library and spanked me. I still remember that.

MM: How embarrassing!

LC: No, I wasn't especially embarrassed, but it was a very nice thing for him to do. I don't remember what I laughed at, but I guess it wasn't very nice. I'm Irish, you know and I laugh!

MM: One of the things I remember having heard about, is Coloma Play Days. Do you remember those? Where other schools would come and visit in Coloma?

LC: No, I don't have any recollection of those. See I was away from '33 until I came back up here to build the house. I lost at least two generations then I had to get reacquainted when I came back up here. One of the Veerkamps who was about my age came to visit me when I first came up and we sat down and she brought me up to date on her family. And of course, I knew all of the Winje's at that time. Now I don't know the younger generation. I went to school with Norman Winje and Harold Winje and Verna Winje and George Winje and Axel Winje and Mary Winje and Arla Martin I don't know if you've met her or not, and Buzz Winje. I remember when he was born.

MM: He's on our list of people to talk to as well.

LC: Yeah, he's quite active in things. He'll remember a lot of things I won't because I've been away for so long.

MM: How about other names? Veerkamp, you mentioned...

LC: I remember most of the Louie Veerkamps. Well this Mrs. Norris that we brought the property from. Her sister was married to Egbert Veerkamp and they owned the property that's right across from old Gold Hill School House. Where someone has horses in there now. Let's see. My father's youngest sister married Wesley Grother whose family lived down on the road to Pilot Hill across from Long Garden, the Bacci place. Wesley Grother, and they had one girl, my cousin, she's one of my few cousins that are left and she lives in Lotus and she comes over.

MM: So, this would have been one of your father's sister's children...

LC: My father's younger sister was Betty's mother. And she's dead, of course. When you get my age, just about everybody that you know is dead. I've lost a lot of people. My brother died New Year's Day.

MM: I'm sorry to hear that.

LC: I felt bad about that because we were kind of at outs. A little family misunderstanding.

MM: Let me turn this off for a minute...

MM: January 31, I'm resuming my conversation with Lillian Carman. We were just discussing the fact that there was a colony of black people on the north end of Coloma some time in the past. And she's going to tell us the names of some of those people.

What she recalls.

LC: As I remember one of the women was an ex-slave, she had been a slave. I know very little of the history up until the time I was here, a kid, but I knew them. I'm trying to think of some more names.

MM: Could you read us the names you have written down there? Which of those were black families?

LC: Well, I went to school with Leon and Pauline Sease. I'm not sure how you spell that. I have it spelled S-E-A-S-E, but I'm not sure that's right . Did I show the picture of the school, the one with all of the kids in front of the school?

MM: No, I haven't seen that picture.

LC: And the two, Pauline and Leon were in that. And there names are probably on it.

MM: So they were approximately the same age as you.

LC: They were a little older. I knew more about Leon, because he later worked for my cousin, Andy Johnson, for many years. He was a very valuable employee.

MM: So they must have had black parents here in Coloma.

LC: I don't know who was Pauline and Leon's parents. I don't know that. Um, the names I remember were Marion Burgess and he was kind of on his own and he worked up at the Vineyard House. He worked for Mrs. Hall who ran the Vineyard House at that time and he drank and (laughing) he used to stagger up and down the street here and I went out one morning and saw him lying in the road drunk and things like that. But he was, everybody liked Leon, uh, Marion Burgess.

MM: So, how old was he in relation to you?

LC: I would say he was about my father's age. He was in that era.

MM: And he was not married?

LC: No, not that I know of, I'm sure not. He was just kind of a handyman around and as I say, he worked up here at the Vineyard House for Mrs. Hall.

MM: And he lived on the north end of town?

LC: Well, I think he lived up there [Vineyard House] part of the time. She had some men up there working for her and there was one man that boarded with her who later married her daughter and that caused a big to-do (laughing).

MM: What was her name? At the Vineyard House.

LC: Hall, Mrs. Hall and I can't remember her first name. She was sort on English-y. She used to say "Tee-ooos-day" instead of "Toosday." My mother used to make fun of her and everything.

MM: Now when I transcribe the tape, I don't know how I'm to spell "Tee-ooos-day" to make it different from Tuesday.

LC: Well, anyway, she had a son and two daughters. And the oldest daughter, Nancy played the piano. They had a piano up there and summer nights she used to play that piano – you could hear it all over town practically.

MM: Well, is this the same girl that played for the movies?

LC: Uh, huh, yeah.

MM: OK.

LC: Nancy Hall, then she married, oh gosh, I can't think, but they lived across the river, on Carver Road for many years.

MM: I'm going to stop this ...

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MM: You were saying there are two Winje families...

LC: Yes, there was Sam Winje and he had Verna was the oldest, Norman, Harold, Arlan, I've missed somebody. The youngest one I can't remember his name...

MM: Norman, Harold, Verna, George...

LC: George was a Henry Winje.

MM: OK.

LC: And Clara was a Henry Winje and Axel was a Henry Winje. And Hilmer was the oldest Henry Winje.

MM: And Mary...

LC: Mary was a Henry...Buzz was a Sam, Arla was a Sam. That's all the names I know.

MM: Those are big families. You said that the one Winje family came directly from Norway?

LC: Umm, Hmmm. Sam was here when we came. And he lived up where that new, great big, new vineyard is now.

MM: Yeah, I was shocked when I drove by there today.

LC: Yeah, that thing they're building out in front. Bob [Lillian's driver] just has a fit when he sees that. And then that property eventually went to Tempor, the district attorney that shot himself, and then I guess she sold, I don't know the name of the people that own it now. But anyway, the Winjes had a big house, a great big oak tree over the house.

MM: So that was the Sam Winje family, and that was the ones that had come straight from Norway?

LC: No, the Henry Winjes came then Sam sent for his brother and they came, well I don't know what year, but it was when I was still in grammar school and none of them spoke English. Mrs. Henry Winje had a very nice voice and used to sing for the different programs we had and Axel Winje went bad and ended up in jail. Hilmer may still be alive he was about my age. I saw him at one of the old-

timers parties. Mary Winje married Josh Bassi . You know, have you written up on the Bassi family?

MM: unh-unh. Not yet.

LC: Well, you know Bassi Road and the Bassi's lived up on the end of the road and I went to school with Marcella. Josh died not too long ago and the older girl is dead. She was married to Joe Aicili. He was not sheriff, he some kind of political...They lived, as you go into town, just before you get to Raley's, there's a big complex up there, nice houses and things and that was the Vacini place.

MM: While we have the tape on here, why don't you tell us about your father [Metcalfe] driving a bulldozer for the state and his discovery...

LC: Well, they were doing work down along the river where the mill originally was. There's a monument down there that marks the place where the mill was. Well, my father was digging, at work with a bulldozer, and dug into some of the old timbers. So, that was quite a deal. They got those out and...that was after I went away from home, I wasn't here then. But, there's pictures in the museum. There was a book, I forget the name of it, it was written about that deal...

MM: The discovery...of the old mill.

LC: Yeah, the old mill. Pictures.

MM: OK, let's stop here.

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MM: OK, talk about the plumbing in the Wimmer house (laughing).

LC: Well, there wasn't any. The spring is actually on State property, I told you about that. And I file on it every year. It's MY spring. There's this outfit now that's

got everybody in Northern California listed, some kind of a suit, I don't know, but my lawyer, we just overlook it.

MM: Oh, a class action suit.

LC: The water came down in the pipe to the house up onto the back porch; I showed you the plan of the house, into a great big, like a great big horse trough or something. It went in one end and out the other and then went down into the creek, and that was our running water. It was good water, it was good creek...

MM: The creek actually ran through a corner of the porch of the house.

LC: Well, you couldn't call it a creek, it was piped from the spring.

MM: Oh, it was piped, yeah, and then went back into the creek.

LC: Then that creek goes down and eventually hits the river. Now, the spring water, if there's any that I don't use goes into this creek out here, and goes down into the river eventually.

MM: So, if the house didn't have indoor plumbing, just normal household chores and the routines of daily living, must have been an awful lot of work.

LC: No, you just bring it in, put it on the stove, heat it and use it. The house had what you'd call a bathroom, with a tin bathtub, and that was it. No faucets or anything. My father, fairly soon after we moved in, got running water into the kitchen sink and into that bathtub. I'm not sure. Of course, we had an outside toilet down on the creek.

MM: You had electricity, though...

LC: Not when we moved, no. I think we got the electricity when I was a teen-ager.

MM: Was there electricity in Coloma?

LC: No.

MM: So you had to wait until the lines came through.

LC: They brought electricity in and everybody had it.

MM: And that was when you were a teen-ager.

LC: I believe it was maybe when I was a freshman in high school. I can't remember exactly. But it was about that time. And then there was a telephone here when we came. There was a small telephone company, party lines. Several different party lines. And you answered your phone when your number rang. Like, one long and two shorts or whatever the combination was. I don't remember what ours was.

MM: Were you responsible for household chores like laundry and stuff like that? Did your mother do that work, or did you have help?

LC: I did dishes quite often. No, we didn't ever have help. My father had help in the orchards some times. Not very often, but when he really needed it. I used to irrigate sometimes, help with irrigation. That's why this ditch means so much to me – our ditch user's association.

MM: One of the things I've collected is stories about snakes. Do you have any snake stories?

LC: There has never been a rattlesnake found on this particular property, but they're up behind the cemetery and there are up in there, and they are up in there (gesturing). And a lot of them on Mt. Murphy, of course. There's rattlesnakes all around. We had gopher snakes; I like snakes. No, there's never,

ever – knock on wood – been a rattlesnake on this property. And I don't know why.

MM: Hunh, you have plenty of water, but it's heavily wooded, it's probably pretty cool.

LC: There's more big trees now than there were when we came, because this was all orchard. Did you read... you read the orchard thing. That's pretty accurate. My brother George did that, and he does things properly. And he remembers, he could tell you a lot more about the history and about the old people that lived here, like Fatty Arbuckle, or whatever his name was. He lived in one of the Chinese stores down here.

MM: Fatty Arbuckle did?

LC: I think that was his name.

MM: The actor?

LC: Well, he wasn't an actor, he was just an old guy...

MM: He was a local character?

LC: Fatty... it wasn't Armstrong... it was Fatty... You know George would remember all this.

MM: This was a local character...

LC: Mmm-hmmm, and he was here. You know the two Chinese stores down there, he lived in the first one.

MM: Where is George now?

LC: He's dead. He died New Year's Day. Then of course, the black colony. I'm trying to think, I mentioned Frank Armstalder who was the ditch man at that time. And Frank Clark, from the old Clark family. I told you about the...

MM: Frank Clark, you told me about the dress and the Clark house, but you didn't mention Frank.

LC: Now, he lived in the house just beyond the place right across from Sutter Center, he lived just in the next place. Now, I don't think that's the original house, but that's about where he lived. And Armstalder, Frank Armstalder lived right beyond that in the big two-story house, I think was a hotel at one time, an inn of some kind. And he lived alone, and he was our ditch man and he used to like to talk to the kids when they went by. He'd tell them all his stories, he was quite a kidder, you know, quite a talker. Frank Clark was an old man. But he had this job as custodian of the school. And then, the Thomases of course. I told you about Nancy Vernon.

MM: She was the piano player?

LC: No, no, that's Nancy Hall. Nancy Vernon owned from 49 there across including the property just below the bed and breakfast. There was a really nice house there. Big, it was yellow with white turrets, like a southern style house. And it burned after I lived here. It was ...Nancy had a brother, didn't I tell you about Nance and her brother, he was a little dingy and he always carried a shotgun. I guess I was telling Bob [Lillian's driver] because Bob is into guns. Yeah, Dick Vernon was his name. And he wasn't dangerous or anything, but he was just a little...he never spoke to anybody, he just was around and he always had a

shotgun in his hand. We used to steal pomegranates and we always kept an eye out for Dick. Nancy, his sister, I don't know if she was older or younger, had been a nurse, and she dressed like a man. She always wore pants and boots, when we lived here, or trousers, and she worked like a man, and she took care of Dick and she took out a homestead up here on Mt. Murphy just in the saddle up here. And she'd go up there every night in her horse and buggy and light a light in the window of the cabin there so that people would...she could say that she lived there. Which you had to do to get a homestead. And I don't know what ever happened to that property, who got it. There was a spring there and trees and when come down Mt. Murphy Road, you can see where the place was. But Nancy was not, she didn't mingle with the community, but she was there and she owned all that property. She owned where the poet's house is.

MM: Which house?

LC: The big white house down here, the first going down the house.

MM: What did you call it?

LC: The poet's house.

MM: Oh, the Poet's House – Markham.

LC: Markham's house. I guess he taught school here at one time and he was the superintendent of schools. "The Man With the Hoe." You know that poem, that was the famous poem of his. So we call that the Poet's House. The State owns it now, like everything else. Before that some people by the name of Dorothy Wurston lived there. Her sister and her sister's husband and Dorothy owned the place – the three of them owned it. Then Dorothy was a friend of my father's and

then after my mother died Dorothy and a couple, well, Anne Sederquist, have you talked to Anne Sederquist yet?

MM: No, not yet, I will.

LC: That will be a challenge.

MM: Yes, I hear she has an interesting French accent.

LC: Yeah, and she's not in very good health.

MM: Do you know how to spell Sederquist?

LC: S-E-D-E-R-Q-U-I-S-T. I think that's the way you spell it. Her husband, he worked for the park. He was one of the rangers, I guess, you'd say. She came over here from France when she was quite young. But she kept her accent, sometimes I can't understand her, so I don't see her too often. I never go over and visit her, I just see her at the post office once in a while. Our local post office is sort of a community....you see people that you don't ever see at any other time. Once in a while, I see the man that made my desk there, and I'm leaving it to him when I die. I designed it and we had a few conferences and I told him what I wanted and I got exactly what I wanted and I love that desk, I really enjoyed it. It cost me a small fortune, but it was worth it. When I told my husband, he said," Why don't go out and just buy a desk?" and I said, "I'd never get what I wanted."

MM: That looks like it's made of mahogany.

LC: It's walnut, I think.

MM: And it's large

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MM: We're standing outside Lillian's house looking at the tea plant which she tells me is...

LC: It's a descendant of the old tea plantation they had up in Gold Hill.

MM: The Japanese Tea Colony – Wakamatsu.

LC: Yeah, uh, huh. And this is I guess third generation. Al Veerkamp who had the Gold Hill Nursery at that time, he propagated it. And I had two, I gave the other one to the park.

MM: It's growing here on the North side of the house, but it seems to be thriving.

LC: Yeah. It's really growing; we have to keep pruning it.

MM: Now this is the tea that they really make that you drink.

LC: It's the same tea that they have in New Zealand tea farms.

MM: Do you know what variety of tea they make from it?

LC: No, I don't, I'm not a tea drinker, so I don't know anything about it. But, it has the beautiful little white blossoms all over it.

MM: I see some pods too.

LC: Yeah, those are the pods from the blossoms, and it's a camellia. A tea plant is a camellia.

MM: You can see the leaves look like camellia leaves and this is a bud; it looks like a tiny little camellia bud.

LC: It blooms at an odd time of year. There's some little buds that didn't make it.

MM: Really, it looks like they could still come along.

LC: That one does, yeah.

MM: Some of them are past and look...

LC: It was blooming over here, now you can see a little bit more and I could see it from inside through the window, it was just beautiful.

MM: Here's like almost blooming, right here. Oh, and up on top there, too. Very interesting.

LC: It gets kind of beat up on the outside and the deer nibble on it.

MM: Now this is a different kind of descendant from Coloma old-timers. Thanks.

Appendix A

Orchards

This text is the transcribed notes made by George Homer Metcalfe, Lillian Metcalfe Carman's brother.

In 1920, there were 15 commercial orchards in Coloma with a combined acreage of about 80. By commercial is meant those that produced fruit for the market. Very few, if any provided the sole support of the owners most of whom had part-time or seasonal jobs were semi-retired or were engaged in other agriculture such as dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats and poultry.

Owners of these orchards were Kane, Johnson, Metcalfe, Stearns, Norris, Thomas, Almstaldan, Mahler, Delorey, Papini, Hooper, Gallagher, Bane [Bayne], Thole and Carver.

A wide variety of fruits and nuts were produced including 9 varieties of peaches, 7 of apples, 6 of pears, and five of plums. There were also figs, quinces, persimmons, olives, pomegranates, cherries, walnuts, pecans & almonds.

Some of these were only a tree here and there. Peaches, plums, pears and apples were the main crops. Lady apples were a unique crop not grown elsewhere in the county except in the Lotus area.

The larger orchards including Kane, Johnson, Mahler, Metcalfe and Gallagher had packinghouses where fruit was packaged for the San Francisco and eastern markets. Gradually home packing was abandoned and fruit was trucked to packing plants in Placerville.

Production held about steady in the 20's, declined in the 30s and 40s and the last orchard went out of production in the early 70s.

Appendix B

This text is the transcription of notes made by Lillian Carman.

While I'm "snowbound" I might as well start a little project I've had in mind since I've been here in Coloma. I am going to set down all I can remember from my childhood years about the people here.

My main source will be remembering Mrs. Norris (Ella Norris, ne Ella_____) from when my father bought this ranch (in 1920) and who was an inveterate gossip and who made an almost daily walk from her new residence (the home Sederquist live in now) – two or three blocks to our house and sat and talked to my mother who became rather frantic as the months – and years went by with this irritation. Mrs. Norris held the mortgage on the ranch so a certain amount of diplomacy had to be used – of which my mother was rather short of –

I'm trying to unravel the Norris family and can't remember Ella's dead husband's name – or what he died of. She had also lost a baby (crib age). Ella was old (in my eyes) and not attractive or too agreeable and her life story (from other sources) was thus. When she was young she had a beau Will Stearns and I suppose she thought they would marry. However, a doctor and his family came to town and the fragile pretty daughter captured Will's heart and he married Cleo and left Ella in the lurch. She in retaliation married Norris (Albert, his name was, I think).

Cleo and Will had no children – Cleo became a semi-invalid who spent her winters in bed and was waited on by Will & her sister who lived with them. Cleo inherited money from her well-to-do father and they lived in a fashionable little

white house on the main street of Coloma (now owned by Barnum) Wills half brother (or brother-in-law or something) lived in what may have been the old Stearns place – will have to check on that – I remember Cleo as a member of swimming supper parties which we indulged in during the heat of the summer. Cleo went in swimming as did everyone and she was a sight – skinny and old in a baggy old fashioned bathing "costume" – and I can see her daintily splashing water over herself before the plunge and swim. I see her in eyeglasses and a floppy hat and can almost hear her voice and lady-like expression. Ella who was a bit more earthy and extremely well endowed made facetious fun of poor Cleo. As the years passed and Ella & Will became reconciled and Ella being a widow and in need of a helping hand Will got into the habit of walking to Ella's house every day with her mail. This little rite continued as long as they both were alive and able. Cleo died in the meantime. Will was a sort of nothing man. He had been handsome and spoiled and seemed to have no particular ambition, A sort of genteel ne'er do well – and always Ella's Willy. After he died his property passed to some relatives and their name has left me for the moment. Two little girls, younger than I and expert swimmers – very blond and Swedish – used to come in the summer with their parents & spend some time with "Uncle Will" and it was this family that got Will's house around 1930. The McGonagle house was bought by Dr. Oneida & his family for a vacation, weekend party place and was the talk of the town for may years, The sound of their parties could be heard all over the valley, This home is now Friday House.

Names come to mind, the one-handed postmaster, Frank Armstalden (and I'll get back to him) Frank Clark who was the school custodian when I first started to school – and who had belonged to the Clark family that had lived in the big two-story house that was still furnished boarded up. I was in it once. What a bonanza that place would be now. It was from an old trunk in that house that I was given a dress, circa 1860 that had been worn by a Senator's wife in Washington D. C. Brown Taffeta and just my size. The Clark heirs finally tore down the house & Jack Cummings and his mother built a cottage on the property where it still stands at the Discovery House owned by McCoys. Old Man Clark as we called him lived in what had been a nice house next to the Armstalden home which had been a hotel. Frank Armstalden lived alone in this two-story building – he was a character who loved to "shoot the bull" and tease the kids on their way to school, which was next door to his place. The schoolhouse was white then with a slate roof. I started to school there in 1920 when I was five. My first teacher was Emma Papini. The Papini family lived in a large white house where the Sierra Nevada House is now. There were three girls and a son (who wasn't "quite right") in the family. Emma & Cecelia were teachers and the youngest girl, Virginia was about my age. Mr. & Mrs. Papini were small and in poor health. I can see Mrs. P. with her nodding head and I can hear her frail voice. Her brother Joe (I'll think of his name later maybe) had a place across the street at what was later a swimming beach. And is now called Pleasant Beach or something.

There were two Thomas families, Fred and _____ One of the Thomas houses is now part of the park and has been renovated. The other one, long gone, was near the corner where 49 turns to go to Placerville.

Nancy Vernon and her "crazy" brother lived on High Street in a yellow southern plantation style home which has burned down leaving the chimney standing. Nancy owned the Poet's home and rented it out at various times – occasionally to the current teacher. The teachers are not too clear in my mind. I remember Emma Papini, a Mrs. Standish (something like that) a Miss Gonzales, a man teacher who spanked me once and the rest are vague.

Down town on the main street, there was a Mr. Pontas who ran a little store & a gas station and who cut hair. A relative of his also had a little candy & tobacco store and sold home made ice cream.

Johnny Hames Mahler

Pearly Monroe Johnson – Bob, George

Marion Burgess

Leon, Pauline Leese

Axel Kielander, Rasmussen

Hanry Galleger Billy

Melvin Alice Ray Marie Frank Wilma Helen

Carver

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